

TITLE

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION METHODOLOGIES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

- [1] The present invention generally relates to methods and arrangements for providing foreign language instruction in a classroom, tutoring and/or multimedia setting.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- [2] Numerous foreign (or "second") language teaching methodologies (i.e., methodologies for teaching a target language to one or more native speakers of a different language) have been proposed and implemented in the past, each ascribing to a given philosophy, academic theory or general approach in attempting to fulfill any of a number of predetermined objectives. (The terms "second language [learning, teaching, acquisition, etc...]" should be understood as being interchangeable herein with the terms "foreign language [learning, teaching, acquisition, etc...]".)
- [3] Whilst some methodologies are intended to teach merely "survival" phrases, e.g., for the occasional traveler, others may be intended to impart, over a given period of time, a native or near-native grasp of the target language. Some methodologies may be intended for students from a variety of different original

linguistic or cultural backgrounds, while others may be targeted towards students of a single specific linguistic or cultural background. All in all, the continued advent of greater global cooperation and trade has meant that effective methodologies of foreign language teaching and learning are becoming ever more important, whether in the context of non-English speakers learning English in its role as an increasingly important and visible global *lingua franca*, or in providing instruction in one or more widespread languages (e.g., Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, or Spanish) associated with regions of increasing economic, political and/or humanitarian importance.

- [4] Much research has historically been geared towards ascertaining those factors in a pedagogical setting that are most conducive to assisting a student in optimally internalizing different aspects of the target language. The "Direct Method" of Berlitz and "Audiolingual Method" (or "Army Method"), quite well-known to even casual learners, tend to involve a rote-based, repetitive approach that many have found to be exceedingly emotionless and mechanical. Other, more arcane methods such as "The Silent Way" and "Suggestopedia" exist, with relatively small numbers of followers, primarily because of the use of highly unconventional teaching instruments (e.g. colored rods in "The Silent Way" and classical music in "Suggestopedia"). Methods such as these four have normally been supplanted over

time in the face of new research and experimentation.

- [5] "Total Physical Response" is quite well-known to a large number of language teachers in its emphasis on directly associating kinetic movements on the part of students with new linguistic items to be learned. However, it tends to fall short in its limited capacity to convey and inculcate more abstract concepts. Finally, the "Natural Approach" of Stephen Krashen has been quite well-known in the academic literature for some years now, and has long appealed to teachers and theoreticians alike for advocating a strong emphasis on internalization of a target language through listening and free conversation. A key element of this methodology (one of five hypotheses, but perhaps the central one) involves providing linguistic "input" to students at least at level ("i+1") that intentionally presents a bit of a stretch for them. This may well provide a useful starting point in developing new language methodologies, but it does not necessarily provide a complete recipe for optimized instruction. (The terms "student[s]" and "learner[s]" should be understood as being interchangeable herein and can relate to learning in a classroom environment, a one-on-one tutoring environment, via multimedia arrangements, or via any combination of these.)

- [6] Many commercially available products employ targeted methods for promoting second language

acquisition. For instance, "French in Action" is a set of 24 half-hour lessons of increasing difficulty wherein actors engage in relatively complex dialogs (as compared with the student's likely level of proficiency at that point) that are first played in their entirety without interruption, at full speed, and then are later replayed with opportunities for student repetition. Such dialogs are scarcely different from the type of dramatic presentation that might normally be seen in a TV show or movie targeted at and understood by native or near-native speakers only. Between the two presentations of dialog, there is an extended center section wherein an instructor (the producer of the videos) engages in extensive demonstrations of different linguistic issues associated with the dialog just seen. All discourse is entirely in French. This method can prove to be of an inaccessibly high level to students for whom each respective episode is intended, which could lead to students missing out on retaining various key concepts.

- [7] Other language learning methodologies can be gleaned from various issued U.S. patents and published U.S. patent applications. U.S. Patent No. 5,882,202 (Sameth et al.) relates to a computer-based language learning method wherein a multimedia presentation is employed to teach a foreign language via the display of story-related frames and dialog balloons. A pronunciation guide displays a representation of human lips enunciating selected words or phonemes. U.S. Patent No. 6,302,695 (Rtischev

et al.) contemplates language training via sharing over the internet. Particularly, one or more pre-recorded files that can include phrases or messages in a target foreign language are obtainable over the internet from a "conversation partner", whereupon the learner can respond to that message (e.g. by repeating the message) and send it to a third party (an "instructor"), who can then provide an "instruction" message relating to an assessment of the learner's attempt to speak in the target language. Both of these approaches, like many others, can tend to provide something of a cold and antiseptic learning environment not readily conducive to meaningful student participation.

- [8] It should thus now be appreciated that, despite the numerous historical efforts made towards developing optimized solutions for promoting effective second language instruction and acquisition, room for improvement continually exists. Indeed, many known instruction methodologies do not fully succeed in assisting students in effectively internalizing linguistic properties peculiar to the target language, developing an adequate spoken competence of the target language in a reasonable time frame, and/or breaking down innate "affective barriers" that the student might bear towards learning the target language. Accordingly, an evolving need has generally been recognized in connection with providing methods and arrangements for language instruction that overcome the

shortcomings and deficiencies of known methodologies such as discussed heretofore.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[9] There are broadly contemplated herein, in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention, methodologies of foreign language instruction that help students "relive" a "linguistic childhood", thus allowing the students to re-adopt techniques that had been quite successful in their first language acquisition.

[10] The linguistic input is preferably delivered via different types of dramatic interactions between two "teacher-actors" that are presented live, via multimedia, or via a hybrid of both. The linguistic input preferably includes "high frequency" vocabulary and syntax items. "Comprehension" and "retention" on the part of students represent two significant objectives in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Accordingly, the delivery of dramatic interactions is preferably embellished, or and augmented, in a manner to impart "comprehension", while "retention" is preferably facilitated by configuring the dramatic delivery with a story line for imparting a "heightened experience", or by including a provision for student participation. Further, the linguistic items are preferably delivered to the students in

manageable "doses" that are graded as to be appropriate for the students' level.

[11] Other refinements and variations on broader concepts associated with embodiments of the present invention will be appreciated from the discussion herebelow.

[12] Generally, there is broadly contemplated in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention a method of providing instruction of a target language to one or more students whose native language is different from the target language, the method comprising the step of presenting dramatic interactions between at least two teacher-actors, wherein each dramatic interaction: includes pre-scripted dialog primarily in the target language between the at least two teacher-actors, the pre-scripted dialog involving delivery of a plurality of preselected target language items; and includes embellishments to the pre-scripted dialog, the embellishments being adapted to facilitate comprehension of the plurality of preselected target language items on the part of the one or more students; wherein the pre-scripted dialog and embellishments thereto are configured for recreating a learning environment akin to childhood first language acquisition.

[13] Further, there is broadly contemplated in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention, a multimedia arrangement for providing

instruction of a target language to one or more students whose native language is different from the target language, the multimedia arrangement comprising an arrangement for presenting dramatic interactions between at least two teacher-actors, wherein each dramatic interaction: includes pre-scripted dialog primarily in the target language between the at least two teacher-actors, the pre-scripted dialog involving delivery of a plurality of preselected target language items; and includes embellishments to the pre-scripted dialog, the embellishments being adapted to facilitate comprehension of the plurality of preselected target language items on the part of the one or more students; wherein the pre-scripted dialog and embellishments thereto are configured for recreating a learning environment akin to childhood first language acquisition

LISTING OF APPENDICES

- [14] To help impart an even better understanding of the embodiments of the present invention, the following Appendices are included herewith:
- [15] Appendix A: A sample play entitled "Apple Thief".
- [16] Appendix B: A sample play entitled "Getting Ready for School".
- [17] Appendix C: A sample play entitled "Doctor".

- [18] Appendix D: A sample play entitled "Sandwich".
- [19] Appendix E: A sample play entitled "Blindman's Bluff".
- [20] Appendix F: A sample play entitled "Hot Tea on a Cold Rainy Day".
- [21] Appendix G: A sample set of skits for "Apple Thief"
- [22] Appendix H: A sample "Type 1 Display Substitute for Stage Prompter" for "Apple Thief" in the form of a "key language item display".
- [23] Appendix J: A sample "Type 2 Display Substitute for Stage Prompter" for "Apple Thief" in the form of a "beat" transcript.
- [24] Appendix K: An illustrated story corresponding to "Apple Thief".
- [25] Appendix M: A tabular listing of similarities between the features of childhood first language acquisition and those of methodologies contemplated herein.
- [26] Appendix V: A video compact disc, that can be played on a personal computer in "WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER", containing an entire lesson (i.e., play and skits) corresponding to "Apple Thief" in Mandarin Chinese (intended for non-Mandarin speakers).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

- [27] There is broadly contemplated in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention a language instruction methodology for students of essentially any age group (including adults) that seeks to emulate a student's acquisition of a first language, or to allow the student to essentially re-live a "linguistic childhood" in the target language. This stems from a broad recognition of the efficiency with which children typically acquire their first (native) language, hence the desirability of replicating such efficiency among learners of all age groups.
- [28] Though at first sight elusive to define, the concept of a "linguistic childhood", as well as optimal modes for its promotion, will be better appreciated from the discussion provided herebelow, and particularly from Appendix M, listing similarities between the features of childhood first language acquisition and those of methodologies contemplated herein.
- [29] In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, two techniques of delivering language instruction are broadly contemplated:
- "theater of life" plays; and
- "reinforcement and expository" skits and visuals.

- [30] It will be appreciated from the discussion herebelow that both of the above techniques involve dramatic interactions on the part of at least two teachers serving as actors (thus, "teacher-actors", a term interchangeable herein with "teachers") and that these dramatic interactions are presented in a manner (as explained herebelow) to deliver linguistic input (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, etc.) for optimal "comprehension" and "retention" on the part of the student(s).
- [31] In this vein, a student's "comprehension" is preferably facilitated through embellishments (or augmentations) to the delivered dialog, such as the use of tangible props (to be manipulated or referred to by at least one teacher-actor or student), visual depictions, sound effects, repetition, exaggerated gesturing and/or exaggerated intonation. (The terms "embellish" and "augment", as well as their respective grammatical derivations, are used herein interchangeably and are intended to refer to one and the same phenomenon as just defined.)
- [32] On the other hand, during the "theater of life" plays "retention" by a student is preferably facilitated through the presentation of linguistic items in the meaningful context of plays with plots and story lines; as will be further appreciated below, the association of a dramatically presented story line with the delivered dialog will provide a heightened experience that will assist a student in long-term retention and

future recall. During the "reinforcement and expository" skits, the "retention" is preferably facilitated through the provision of participation in the skits and consequent formation of personal experience with the target language item by the students.

[33] Preferably, both of the above-mentioned techniques involving dramatic interactions will be intermingled in the course of one or more lessons wherein each technique has its own advantages inuring to the benefit of the students' overall learning process. In this vein, the two techniques will preferably "feed into" one another so as to involve a virtually seamless presentation of the instructional material intended to be conveyed.

[34] Generally, the "theater of life" technique is intended to recreate life-like situations in a classroom through "plays" which preferably aim to teach, e.g., between about 10 and about 20 target language items (i.e., vocabulary items), in a story setting. The "reinforcement and expository" skits, on the other hand, normally aim to teach just one target language item at a time in isolated contexts (i.e., without a story setting). As such, the "skits" may essentially be deemed to be very limited and brief "plays" involving just a few dialogs, sometimes even just one. These and other differences between the two types of dramatic interactions will be discussed in more detail herebelow.

[35] Conceivably, lessons can be delivered in any of three manners:

1. "live" instruction (i.e., with teachers and student[s] in the same physical space, such as a classroom);
2. multi-media instruction (e.g., wherein lessons are prerecorded on DVD, video CD [hereafter "VCD"], CD-ROM, etc., and selectively viewed by students on suitable equipment);
3. hybrid instruction, involving both live and multi-media instruction.

[36] There are primarily discussed herein methodologies of the first type, i.e., live instruction, but it should be understood that all three of the above instruction types are not only broadly contemplated herein but involve aspects that are freely interchangeable with other instruction types. Whereas live instruction may well be particularly suitable for children, adults may benefit from instruction via multi-media. Of course, any of the live, multi-media, or hybrid instruction types can easily be tailored to fit the needs of specific age groups.

[37] Multimedia instruction can take place via essentially any suitable arrangement, as presently in existence or yet to be invented, including the internet (e.g., via streaming video), film, or broadcast television, as well as videocassettes, DVD's and VCD's.

[38] Hybrid instruction, for its part, could conceivably involve any reasonable combination of live and multimedia instruction configured for optimal effect or assembled in view of available resources (human or otherwise). For instance, videos, DVD's or VCD's could be used to present "theater of life" plays while "reinforcement and expository" skits could be presented live (i.e., with teachers acting out the skits).

[39] As will be appreciated herebelow, a significant common aspect associated with the delivery of both "theater of life" plays and "reinforcement and expository" skits is in the augmentation (or embellishment) of various aspects of the delivery in an effort to bring about an easily interpretable appreciation and comprehension of the meaning of the new, previously untaught language items. Augmentation, or embellishment, as discussed herein, should be understood to cover what are generally known in the applied linguistic arts as "extra-linguistic clues," but should also be understood as covering essentially any additive effort, associated with any spoken words or phrases, that aid in interpretation and comprehension of the new, previously untaught language items by the students.

[40] It will be appreciated from the discussion herebelow that plays, through plots, story lines and meaningful contexts thereof (along with embellishments as mentioned heretofore), will provide what can be called "heightened experience" that would facilitate retention of

the given language items in the long term memory and their future recall. (See discussion on "elaborative encoding" herebelow.)

[41] Though, as will be appreciated herebelow, skits indeed will not have a story line or plot, they will preferably include other features that will help students retain the new language items that are introduced. One such feature, preferably, is represented by direct student participation that will provide "personal experience" with the new language items.

[42] An overall aim, in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention, is to provide an intensity of experience in language instruction that helps overcome deficiencies arising from the relatively shorter duration of the learning experience. In other words, the long, drawn-out process that normally constitutes first language acquisition, where the duration of learning over an extended period of time plays a role in promoting the "internalization" of language (e.g., where various vocabulary words are experienced a very large number of times), cannot clearly be replicated with the comparatively limited time available for a typical second or foreign language learning environment (e.g., where vocabulary words might only be heard a few times). ("Internalization" is the process by which the language becomes part of one's nature through unconscious assimilation.) To make up for this

virtually unavoidable deficiency, at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention aims to essentially imbue the second/foreign language learning process with various measures of intensity, in any of a wide variety of forms such as the meaningful context of the story line in a play and student participation in a skit, sufficient to more firmly inculcate newly taught language items in a manner to optimally promote long-term retention and future retrieval.

[43] Both techniques (i.e., plays and skits as outlined above) aim to promote efficient and effective internalization of a foreign language through well defined and graduated dramatic interactions presented yet in manageable "doses" that are intended not to overwhelm or intimidate students.

[44] At the same time, the conscious teaching of grammar is preferably avoided. As will be appreciated herethroughout, the creation of a learning environment that promotes re-living a "linguistic childhood" will avoid the overt teaching of grammatical principles and structures and instead will aim to help students learn and internalize the target language in a more natural, unconscious manner.

[45] In delivering manageable "doses" of material to students, an English language course may teach about 3000 frequent lexemes. (Lexeme is a meaningful expression in the vocabulary of a language and may include one or more words,

wherein for multiple word expressions the individual words do not convey the meaning of the whole [e.g., "war chest", "give up"].) The course could be divided into five levels. At the average rate of 15 lexemes per play, such a course would have a total of 200 plays. If students attend classes twice a week, at the rate of one play per class, each level with 40 plays can be completed in about 20 weeks (5 months); and the whole course with 200 plays, in 2 years.

[46] Preferably, each individual lesson is made up of one "theater of life" play and a related (i.e., pedagogically consonant) "reinforcement and expository" lesson (i.e., a lesson that is pedagogically consonant with the play and thus contains material to be taught that is analogous or similar to the material taught in the play). The lesson time will preferably be divided into three sessions, starting with a "theater of life" play, followed by a "reinforcement and expository" lesson (skits and visuals, preferably with a pronunciation drill), and thence repetition of the "theater of life" play.

[47] With the above general concepts in mind, "theater of life" plays will first be discussed, followed by "reinforcement and expository" skits and visuals.

[48] "Theater of life" plays are preferably configured to recreate life-like situations, will each preferably aim to make students comprehend the meaning and usage of, e.g.,

between about 10 and about 20 predetermined new target language items (or "key language items"), which preferably are vocabulary items. On the other hand, syntactic structures of dialogs in a "theater of life" play are appropriately graded for different levels of difficulty in the target language.

[49] Each new, previously untaught key language item is written into the play in a way that ensures: "comprehension" of meaning of the new item through an augmented/embellished mode of delivery of dialogs; and "retention" of the items through the plot, story line and meaningful contexts thereof and, thus, goes beyond mere recitation on the part of instructors.

[50] Several Appendices hereto contain examples of "theater of life" plays in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment of the present invention. The characteristics cited above and discussed variously herein will be appreciated from a reading of the plays. The Appendices contain "theater of life" plays as follows:

Appendix A - "Apple Thief"

Appendix B - "Getting Ready for School"

Appendix C - "Doctor"

Appendix D - "Sandwich"

Appendix E - "Blindman's Bluff"

Appendix F - "Hot Tea on a Cold Rainy Day"

- [51] As mentioned herebelow, there are also filed herewith the following Appendices corresponding to (and thus presenting content from) the play "Apple Thief": an Appendix G, containing "reinforcement and expository" skits; an Appendix H, containing a "Type 1 Display Substitute for Stage Prompter" (see below) in the form of a "key language item display"; an Appendix J, containing a "Type 2 Display Substitute for Stage Prompter" in the form of a beat transcript; and an Appendix K, containing an illustrated story. As further mentioned herebelow, there is also filed herewith as Appendix V a video compact disc containing an entire lesson (i.e., play and skits) corresponding to "Apple Thief".
- [52] Since "Apple Thief" on the video disc aims to teach Mandarin Chinese, it is strongly recommended that it be viewed (by a non-Mandarin speaker) prior to any review of the English-language Appendices A, G, H, J and K; in this manner, a non-Mandarin speaker will not be "primed" about the content of the lesson on the video disc and will thus be able to much more readily assess and appreciate the full impact of the teaching methodology presented on the video disc. Of course, once the Mandarin-based video disc has been so viewed, the accompanying Appendices A and G can effectively serve as an approximate (albeit not literal) translation of the Mandarin content.

[53] As can be appreciated from the plays in Appendices A-F, the augmented/embellished aspects of the teachers' delivery may include gestures, intonations, prop manipulation, sensory experiences, etc and/or the repetition of phrases or lines containing "key language items". (A particularly interesting type of embellishment is the sound effect [auditory sensory experience] used in "Hot Tea" [Appendix C], allowing new, previously untaught words "rain" and "umbrella" to be incorporated into a play without actually "bringing" rain into the classroom.)

[54] It is recognized that "elaborative encoding", a phenomenon known in applied linguistic arts (and particularly cognitive psychology), facilitates retention and recall of a stimulus (such as, a lexeme) by associating the stimulus with prior knowledge or a meaningful context. In at least one embodiment of the present invention, "elaborative encoding", such as: embellishments as mentioned heretofore, and heightened and personal experiences (provided through meaningful contexts of the story line of the plays, and individual participation by the students in the skits, respectively) facilitate retention of the given language items in the long term memory and their future recall via multiple cognitive pathways, thus created through said embellishments and experiences in the mind of the students. Thus, "elaborative encoding" compensates for a compromised short duration of experience with the language items in the classroom where long and repetitive experience

with the items, as happens during the acquisition of the first language, cannot be provisioned.

[55] For example, in teaching concrete (i.e., tangible, non-abstract) vocabulary, sensory experiences of the students are preferably tapped. Examples of concrete vocabulary are: things that students can see (e.g., cat), taste (e.g., sour), smell (e.g., perfume), hear (e.g., noisy) and touch (e.g., smooth). On the other hand, abstract vocabulary (such as joy, superior, moral, courage) that cannot adequately be deciphered or comprehended merely through a sensory pathway can be taught through on-stage experiences, analogies and metaphors.

[56] In order to create life-like situations, and as a further vehicle for providing embellishments to taught language items, "theater of life" plays preferably make use of toys and household/classroom items as stage props; the off-the-shelf availability of a wide variety of toys in retail stores can provide logistical convenience as well as cost savings in comparison with customized props as typically used in commercial theater,, which involve, e.g., sketching, ordering and approving the props, etc. It should be noted that the toys in the "theater of life" plays are usually not used to entertain the students; the toys are merely relatively cost effective and logistically convenient substitutes for custom made stage props. Examples of readily available toy props are

found in Table 1. Examples of how toy props could be used in plays are found in Table 2.

Table 1

	Setting	Toys
Indoors	Kitchen	Stove, pan, pot, ladle, microwave
	Ironing	Iron and ironing board
	Clinic	Stethoscope, spring-loaded syringe
	Shop	Cash Register, trolley
Outdoors	Road	Road side cones; motor cars, bikes, buses, trucks
	Battle Fields	Warrior Set: bow, quiver, spear, knife, headgear
		Army Set: Walkie-talkie, helmet, grenade
	Camping	Camp, glow stars
	Fishing	Artificial fish that can swim and magnetic fishing rods to catch fish

Table 2

Play Title	Props
<u>Doctor</u> Story line: Cough patient visiting the doctor; doctor examining the patient; doctor giving the patient an injection, pills and cough mixture; payment of the doctor's fee; taking the medicine and spitting out	Toy: Doctor's Box(stethoscope, pencil light, injection syringe) Cough syrup (coke) in a bottle (e.g., Coke 390 ml bottle without wrapper); Two small jars each with large colored pills, one color in each jar (M&M candies) Bags for the pills - larger than usual (e.g., Ziplock) A large ordinary doll Optional: white coat
<u>A Pool in the Room</u> Story line: Measuring the depth of the kids' pool, a swimming toy, dropping and retrieving coins in the pool, selling the toy, increasing the price and getting robbed	Kids' vinyl pool that can be inflated and connected with water pipe. A toy frog that can swim. Rulers-2 different sizes Hand towel-1, floor towel-1, local money

- [57] To facilitate rehearsal and subsequent performance by the teachers (who often are not formally trained in the art of acting) of the "theater of life" plays, the plays are preferably divided into several "beats", or shorter segments of dialog, that each contain and emphasize, e.g., between about 1 and about 5 of the key language items. It may be noted that the segmentation of the plays into "beats" need not be noticed by the students watching the play as the transitions from one "beat" to the next should be seamless.
- [58] Though "theater of life" plays contain very short and simple dialogs, a capacity for prompting the teacher-actors, at least as a fallback, may still be desirable in the event that a teacher-actor fails to recall any portion of the dialogs. Since cost considerations will likely not warrant the use of a "prompter" ("prompter" is common in amateur theater), prompting could still be effected via relatively inexpensive arrangements.
- [59] For instance, a display may preferably be placed in a manner (e.g., on easels) that is visible to the teacher-actors but not to the students. Examples of what may be contained in such a display are shown in Appendices H and J. Appendix H shows a "key language item display", wherein for a particular play (here, "Apple Thief"), each beat is enumerated along with the key language items to be used for each beat. Accordingly, the teacher-actors will see what key language items correspond to

which beat, thus helping them refresh their recall of the lines of dialog associated with each beat. An alternative display is shown in Appendix J, whereby the entire dialog of a beat is displayed to the teacher actors. (A beat sample from a play, again, "Apple Thief," is shown.) Here, the beat is specially formatted in large fonts with dialogs for the two characters in two different colors (or shades) of text. (The dark vertical bar above "Repeat" shows dialogs that are to be repeated.) It will be appreciated that the use of two different colors in practice (such as red and blue), corresponding respectively to the dialog of the two different teacher-actors, would have a positive practical benefit in providing sufficient contrast between different lines of dialog that is easily discernible from a moderate distance. Of course, the displays contemplated in accordance with Appendices H and J are but illustrative (and non-restrictive) examples; essentially any type of meaningful and helpful display for the benefit of the teacher-actors' recall is conceivable in accordance with the embodiments of the present invention.

- [60] Key language items for plays are preferably derived from one or more "high frequency lexeme" lists, as well-known in the applied linguistic arts. (Again, a lexeme is a meaningful expression in the vocabulary of a language and may include one or more words, as discussed further above. Lexemes thus include words, compounds and phrasal verbs.) An employed list of high frequency lexemes will

preferably account for an estimated 90% of words in everyday usage. It may be noted that the information on high frequency vocabulary and structure of the language has improved dramatically during the past 15 to 20 years because of the huge computer language corpuses that can be drawn upon. Such corpuses provide not only information on frequency (which is now much more dependable due to the very large size of the corpuses - hundreds of millions of words in English) but also on collocates (i.e., pairs or groups of words that are frequently juxtaposed to an extent much greater than average pairs or groups of words, e.g., "mortgage" collocates with "lend" and "property") and concordances (i.e., lists of words in a text or groups of texts, with information about where in a text each word occurs and how often it occurs).

[61] Indeed, in order to ensure controlled increase in difficulty levels i.e., systematic sequencing of plays, one may preferably parallel the sequencing with what is known of first (childhood) language acquisition on three levels:

- i. Natural order of lexemes
- ii. Natural order of language-structure
- iii. Complexity of plots of the plays

[62] Though essentially any suitable method or arrangement may be employed to accomplish the above, some useful insights were gleaned from

experimentation. Some illustrative and non-restrictive examples from the experimentation are thus discussed herebelow.

[63] To point (i) above, English textbooks used in elementary (primary) grades were collected. Through a computer program, the first occurrence of words in such text books were recorded that were present in the aforementioned list of lexemes. This way, the lexemes were given an "age-mark". When the same lexeme (denoting the same meaning) occurred at different level of primary books, mix of averaging techniques and discretion was used. The lexemes with a lowest age mark were thus used to write "theater of life" plays for a first level (hereafter "Level One"), with lexemes having gradually increasing age marks were used for "Level Two", "Level Three", etc. A primary advantage of using textbooks was that, given how elusive it has been historically to document, in an adequately comprehensive manner, the order in which a child produces words for the first time, the collective knowledge of child textbook curriculum designers could be tapped; such designers have experience in adequately discerning and determining the appropriate grading of lexemes.

[64] To point (ii) above, it is recognized that linguists have recorded the acquisition order of the structure of the language (for example, see, Krashen, Stephen D. and Terrell, Tracy D., "The Natural Approach; Language Acquisition in the Classroom", Alemany Press

1983). Thus, it came to be appreciated in the aforementioned experimentation that a summary of such an order from various sources (including language curricula that rely on such research), may guide a "theater of life" "playwright" in introducing gradual structural complexity of the target language into the plays.

- [65] To point (iii) above, to match the cognitive demands of a "theater of life" plot with the learning levels of students, a profile of children between the ages of 4 and 12 was prepared. The profile was based on the long-term study, of the Gesell Institute of Human Development, of 545 children from stable two-parent families. The profile recorded the following for different ages in sequence: physical development, routines and self-care, emotions, relationships, interests and activities, school life and ethical sense. The insights developed therefrom thus guided the graduated development of each "theater of life" plot; this, especially, is illustrative of how graded and sequenced "theater of life" plays can help a student "relive a linguistic childhood". (The Gesell studies are detailed in a series of nine books published in the period 1976-1990: "Your Two-Year Old...", "Your Three-Year Old...",...etc., "Your Ten-to Fourteen-Year Old"; Ames, L.B., et al., authors; Dell Publishing.)

- [66] Accordingly, after the list of English lexemes was ready, they were to be used in writing "theater of life" plays. Transforming 3000

English lexemes into "theater of life" plays posed this problem: where and how to start. In order to deal with such a mass of lexemes, the lexemes were grouped under about 1,000 themes (see Table 3) often by referring to thesauruses. Themes themselves were grouped under a broader "umbrella theme" (first and second columns of Table 3).

[67] As shown with an example of umbrella theme and several themes thereunder, the English lexemes were distributed in several columns labeled from Level One to Level Five (though only three levels are shown in the table due to space constraints).

Table 3

Umbrella Theme	Theme	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	...
House	Parts of house	Door, room, wall, lift	roof, gate, step, lock	fence, entrance, lobby	...
	Rooms	Kitchen, bathroom	bedroom	library, study	...
	Kitchen	Kitchen, tap	sink	Pipe	...
	Bathroom	Bathroom, tap, mirror, bath, door	lock, floor, wall, corner	Pipe	...

[68] Each "theater of life" play preferably includes only two characters, though more are conceivable (which would albeit add to costs). This feature is believed to parallel successful acquisition of one's first language, in that one has normally successfully learned his or her native language from two primary caregivers (e.g., two parents). Also, the use of two teachers (and not more) may be preferred for economic reasons (though this, of course, may not be as relevant in the case of multimedia or hybrid instruction types as described above, which would appear to more readily permit the use of more than two teacher-actors since the additional cost would be one-time only, and not recurring as with live instruction).

[69] Preferably, teacher-actors will play the roles of the characters in the plays. Thus, each class will preferably involve two teachers, though more than two are of course feasible (which would albeit add to costs).

[70] The disclosure now turns to "reinforcement and expository" lessons. "Reinforcement and expository" lessons reinforce, confirm and explain the meaning and usage of key language items used in the "theater of life" plays. The students who may not fully comprehend the meaning of a key language item by watching the play will surely understand the meaning through "reinforcement and expository" lessons. Depending on the type of key language item, the "reinforcement and expository" lessons are provided via skits and/or visuals. Further, each "reinforcement and expository" skit or visual may preferably be followed and/or preceded by pronunciation drills.

[71] The "reinforcement and expository" skits can be thought of as rather short, limited plays with just a few dialogs, sometimes just one. As discussed previously, the skits are preferably configured to explain or teach one lexeme in various contexts, and the contexts may or may not be interrelated. Each key language item is preferably acted out through several skits by two teacher-actors. One teacher-actor initiates the skit ("the Initiator"), the other responds ("the Responder"). A sample of such a skit is shown in Table 4. Also, Appendix G contains a full set of skits corresponding to the "Apple Thief" play (Appendix A). It should be noted that the skits, in sum, cover all of the language items from the play. The skits are also present on the video disc submitted herewith as Appendix V, albeit in Mandarin.

Thus, it is again strongly recommended that the video disc be viewed first before reviewing Appendix G.

Table 4

Reinforcement and expository skit sample

give

P

Teacher-actor 1: Give me money.

Teacher-actor 2 gives some money from her wallet.

P

Teacher-actor 1: Give me a pencil.

Teacher-actor 2 gives a pencil to teacher-actor 1.

P

Teacher-actor 1: Give me your bracelet.

Teacher-actor 2 gives a bracelet to teacher-actor 1.

The students may not understand and/ or retain all the words spoken in a skit. They may hear, as a child acquiring her first language, does (it is assumed below, for the present discussion, that students would only understand what a 'pencil' is):

Give me *blah blah*.

Give me pencil.

Give me *blah blah*.

but they would comprehend "give".

[72] An important element of a "reinforcement and expository" skit is participation by the students. Almost all key language items have at least one skit with a **P** tag. **P** stands for "participation". The **P**-tagged skits are suitable for enactment not only between the two teacher-actors but also between a teacher-actor and a student. After all the skits, with and without a **P** tag, have been acted out by the two teacher-actors, one teacher-actor preferably withdraws. The remaining teacher-actor assumes the role of initiator and re-enacts the **P**-tagged skits with the students. Teacher-actors may certainly exercise some discretion to expand, trim or modify the skits to facilitate effective participation.

- [73] To illustrate with an example, in the above skit for "give" in Table 4, a teacher-actor would subsequently turn to an individual student and say, e.g., 'Give me the book'. (The teacher-actor may have to point towards the book in the event that the student has not yet learned the work "book".)
- [74] Student participation in "reinforcement and expository" skits will preferably be mandatory and (in a classroom setting) one-to-one. If, e.g., a teacher-actor extends a bag of candy and asks, "Do you want candy?", the student will be compelled to participate, e.g., either by picking up candy or declining by saying, "I don't want candy." If the student neither speaks nor acts, the interaction obviously fails. (At that point, the teacher-actor will preferably evaluate the causes of the failure and take suitable corrective measures.)
- [75] Though any of a wide variety of approaches are conceivable for conducting a "reinforcement and expository" lesson, the following steps are conceivable in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention:
1. A teacher-actor rings a bell and writes a new key language item on board.
 2. The teacher-actors conduct a pronunciation drill for the item (see below).
 3. Two teacher-actors act out the "reinforcement and expository" skits or show "reinforcement and expository" visuals.

4. One teacher-actor re-enacts the skits with the students.
5. The teacher-actors conduct pronunciation drill again.

The above steps 1-5 for each key language item are repeated.

[76] "Visuals" may be employed in "reinforcement and expository" lessons, especially when a given key language item cannot easily be included as part of a skit or play (e.g., when it cannot easily be employed in natural or prop form, such as "desert" or "river"; or e.g., when it requires more than two characters, such as "crowd"). "Visuals" in this context represent key language items and are preferably concerned mostly, though not exclusively, with nouns. This may be carried out to great effect by taking advantage of the power of internet image search engines, and affordable PC and multimedia projectors, by searching, storing, and later, projecting images in the classroom. Some examples of nouns that may benefit from such treatment are:

words for outdoor locations, such as: beach, desert, forest, highway; and

collective nouns, such as: crowd, riot, rally, meeting

[77] For instance, in teaching the word 'beach', a search for 'beach', 'Hong Kong beach', 'Japan

beach' or 'Mumbai beach' on an internet image search engine would yield several images of beaches, including those in Hong Kong, Japan or Mumbai. Several representative images, including local ones, could thus be chosen and stored in memory prior to the class and shown to the students during the class.

[78] Finally, pronunciation drills could be employed to enhance the impact of the "reinforcement and expository" lessons. The importance of this of course varies depending on the degree of divergence between the phonetic system of a student's native language and that of the target language, and on a student's ability to distinguish and produce sounds in general. In situations where the phonetic system of the target language has the potential to present difficulties regardless of the cause(s), and a student may not perceive and/or produce sounds or phonemes (phonemes are the smallest units of speech that can differentiate one word from another) of the target language correctly, pronunciation drills could be of great assistance.

[79] Thus, a pronunciation drill is preferably held before and after each "reinforcement and expository" skit and the display of each "reinforcement and expository" visual. A teacher-actor preferably writes one key language item on the whiteboard and enunciates it loudly. For an item that students find difficult to pronounce, the teacher-actor splits it into its constituent syllables or

phonemes and enunciates it forward and backward. The students collectively, and, where need be, individually repeat the item after the teacher-actors.

[80] If the students in the class are from just one linguistic background (e.g., all are native Mandarin speakers), preferably one of the two teacher-actors in the classroom could be someone well-versed in both the student language and the target language. The bilingual teacher-actor can anticipate and appreciate the problems of the students, that might occur (especially during pronunciation drills and student-participatory phases of the skits) in the areas of pronunciation and syntax, better than, e.g., a monolingual native speaker can.

[81] The phenomenon of "transfer", wherein a student's knowledge of his/her native language ("L1") colors different aspects of his/her acquisition of a second, or target, language ("L2") is well documented in linguistic literature. A few examples for syntax and pronunciation may illustrate the advantage of a linguistically mixed pair of teacher-actors as discussed above (Table 5).

Table 5

First Language	What is said	What is meant	Cause
Chinese	Let's eat rice together.	Let's have a meal together.	Chinese term for meal and rice is same, 'fàn'
Hindi	Leave my hand.	Let go of my hand.	One of the meaning's of the Hindi equivalent of 'leave' is 'let go'

[82] Not all languages, of course, have similar sounds, similar sound combinations or same sound positions (finals or initials). For example, English speakers have difficulty in pronouncing several sounds of Mandarin; Hindi speakers may not distinguish between the sounds of /v/ and /w/. See the discussion of pronunciation drills, below, for an expanded discussion on the issue.

[83] It should thus be appreciated that a bilingual teacher-actor would possess knowledge about such differences in syntax and pronunciation, appreciate the prospective difficulties students may face and thus could be in a position to suggest efficient solutions.

[84] Reading may be introduced to students via the display of key language items on a board in live instruction, or via the display of titles or subtitles corresponding to key language items in multi-media instruction. Also, in accordance with at least one embodiment of the present invention, the students may be

provided with reading assignments in the form of illustrated stories which highlight the key language items that they have been taught. An example of such a story is shown in Appendix K in a sequential page format. For live or hybrid instruction, such stories may be assigned to be taken home, while for multimedia instruction, such stories may be provided as supplementary material that students may peruse on their own time. An advantage of such stories would be that they introduce a more narrative language style, as opposed to the conversational style used in the plays and the skits. Further, since the stories will not have as many embellishments or extra-linguistic clues as were present in the plays and the skits, the students will be availed of the opportunity to essentially perform a self-check on their memory and comprehension of the language items learned in class.

[85] By way of summary, in an effort to help impart a yet better understanding to the concept of reliving a "linguistic childhood", Appendix M illustrates similarities between typical L1 (first language) acquisition and the inventive methods as contemplated herein (in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment).

[86] Included with the instant application, as Appendix V, is a video compact disc containing an entire lesson ("Apple Thief") in Mandarin involving both a "theater of life" play and "reinforcement and expository" skits. The

compact disc, which can be played in "WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER" on a personal computer, will help impart an even better appreciation of the present invention in accordance with at least one presently preferred embodiment thereof. (It should be noted that the disk does not include pronunciation drills and has no provision for participation by viewers, but still includes a full play and skits.) Again, it is strongly recommended that this disc be viewed before reviewing any of the "paper" appendices corresponding to "Apple Thief" in English (i.e., Appendices A, G, H, J and K).

[87] Though Appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, J and K are all presented herewith in black and white format, it should be appreciated that they are all readily presentable in color format. Particularly, as stated earlier, Appendix J (or any "beat" transcript) can easily be presented in a color format wherein alternating lines of dialog, corresponding to dialog from each of the two teacher-actors, can be presented in different colors such as red and blue. A similar principle can thus be applied to the lines of the plays presented in Appendices A, B, C, D, E and F (or any play). Further, Appendix K (or any illustrated story) may easily be presented in a color format to enhance a student's appreciation and enjoyment of the story.

[88] If not otherwise stated herein, it may be assumed that all components and/or processes described heretofore may, if appropriate, be considered to be interchangeable with similar

components and/or processes disclosed elsewhere in the specification, unless an express indication is made to the contrary.

[89] If not otherwise stated herein, any and all patents, patent publications, articles and other printed publications discussed or mentioned herein are hereby incorporated by reference as if set forth in their entirety herein.

[90] It should be appreciated that the apparatus and method of the present invention may be configured and conducted as appropriate for any context at hand. The embodiments described above are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.